

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 15387

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XO, IN, US

SUBJECT: CHAVAN CRITICIZES DIEGO GARCIA EXPANSION;
CALLS FOR END OF GREAT POWER RIVALRY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

REF: NEW DELHI 15276 NOTAL

1. IN THE OPENING SPEECH ON NOVEMBER 14 TO THE LEFTIST
ORGANIZED PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN,
FOREIGN MINISTER Y.B. CHAVAN EXPRESSED CONCERN
"OVER THE PROJECTED EXPANSION OF THE DIEGO GARCIA MILITARY
BASE, WHICH WILL ONLY AGGRAVATE THE GREAT POWER RIVALRY
AND TENSION." THE SALIENT QUOTES FROM THE MINISTER'S
REMARKS FOLLOW:

THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF INDIA WHOLEHEARTEDLY ENDORSE...

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THE ELIMINATION OF FOREIGN BASES FROM, ND PRESERVATION

OF PEACE IN, THE INDIAN OCEAN.

"WE HAVE REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED OUR POSITION THAT LARGE SCALE PRESENCE OF THE NAVY OF ONE GREAT POWER IS BOUND TO ATTRACT THE NAVIES OF OTHER GREAT POWERS, THUS HEIGHTENING TENSIONS AND CREATING PROBLEMS FOR THE LITTORAL COUNTRIES.

"INDIA IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED AS IT IS A MARITIME NATION WITH A 4,000 MILE COASTLINE AND ITS MAJOR TRADE AND COMMUNICATION ROUTES TRAVERSE THE OCEAN...THE ONUS FOR TAKING CONCRETE ACTION TOWARDS THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE LIES CLEARLY WITH THE GREAT POWERS; FOR IT IS THEY WHO HAVE TO CURB THEIR MILITARY PRESENCE AND ACTIVITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND TO ELIMINATE EXISTING BASES AND TO REFRAIN FROM SETTLING UP NEW BASES.

"IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT INDIA HAS VOICED DEEP CONCERN AND ANXIETY OVER THE PROJECTED EXPANSION OF THE DIEGO GARCIA MILITARY BASE, WHICH WILL ONLY AGGRAVATE THE GREAT POWER RIVALRY AND TENSION...WHILE PEACE IS BEING STRENGTHENED BY PROMOTING DETENTE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GREAT POWERS IN OTHER AREAS OF THE WORLD, THE INDIAN OCEAN SHOULD NOT BECOME A SCENE OF GREAT POWER RIVALRY.

"UNFORTUNATELY ONE STILL HEARS OF JUSTIFICATIONS FOR EXTERNAL NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN OR BASES THEREIN IN TERMS OF NAVAL PRESENCE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF DIPLOMATIC LEVERAGE, A THESIS REMINISCENT OF THE ERA OF GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY...THOSE WHO PROPOSE TO WIELD SUCH LEVERAGE SHOULD NOT OVERLOOK THAT THEIR VERY ACTIONS MAY END AS SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES. THE MANIPULATORS MAY BE DRAWN INTO LOCAL DISPUTES AND BE MANIPULATED. THIS WAS ONE OF THE LESSONS OF THE TRAGEDY OF VIETNAM.

"THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S CALL TO THE GREAT POWERS TO REFRAIN FROM EXPANDING THEIR MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AS AN ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP HAS TO BE HEEDED. THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN PROPOSED BY THE UN IN ITS RESOLUTION THIS YEAR SHOULD ALSO TAKE PLACE AT THE EARLIEST DATE."

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2. INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY PRESIDENT AND LEFTIST D.I. BAROOAH FOLLOWED WITH A STRONGER SPEECH LABELING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MILITARY BASE IN DIEGO GARCIA AS "UNPROVOKED AGGRESSION" ON THE PEOPLES' WAY OF LIFE IN THE LITTORAL COUNTRIES. BAROOAH ALSO SAID SUCH A BASE WAS A GRAVE THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE REGION, AND ASSERTED THAT INDIA OR ANY OTHER LITTORAL STATE COULD NOT TAKE THIS NEO-IMPERALIST MOVE LYING DOWN.

3. THE CHIEF SOVIET DELEGATE, PROFESSOR VIKTOR POPOV, TOLD THE CONFERENCE HIS COUNTRY ALSO HAD A STRONG NAVAL FORCE, BUT ITS SHIPS WERE NOT GOING ABOUT WITH AGGRESSIVE DESIGNS AND HIS COUNTRY WAS NOT BUILDING MILITARY BASES TO DEMONSTRATE ITS MIGHT. IN AN EARLIER PRESS ITEM SOURCED TO THE NOVOSTI PRESS AGENCY POPOV IS QUOTED AS CHARGING WESTERN MILITARY PREPARATIONS FOR INDIAN OCEAN BASES THREATEN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE AFRO-ASIAN COUNTRIES. POPOV CLAIMED THESE WESTERN COUNTRIES CAMOUFLAGED THEIR ACTIVITIES BY RAISING A "NON-EXISTENT SOVIET THREAT." THE SOVIET UNION, HE CONTINUED, HAS NEVER USED ITS FLEET TO ESTABLISH SUPERIORITY OF THE SEAS. POPOV CONTINUED: "LIKE SHIPS OF OTHER NATIONS THEY CALL AT OPEN PORTS AND USE SERVICES AVAILABLE THERE ON A COMMON BASIS... IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE ABSENCE OF RELIABLE AND GENERALLY RECOGNIZED COLLECTIVE SECURITY IN THAT REGION THERE IS NEED TO SEE TO IT THAT NOBODY HINDERS THE PEACEFUL CRUISES OF SOVIET CARGO, FISHING AND RESEARCH SHIPS. BESIDEES IN THE SITUATION OF A STILL NOT TRANQUIL WORLD, THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET NAVAL SHIPS HAS MORE THAN ONCE PLAYED THE ROLE OF A STABLISHING FACTOR. AND WHO CAN SAY SOVIET FLEET HAS EVER HINDERED ANYBODY ON SEA ROUTES, BLOCKED FOREIGN SHORES, LANDED MARININES, POSSESSED BASES ANYWHERE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN OR SOUGHT TO GAIN THEM."

4. COMMENT: HERE WAS LITTLE FOR THE US TO CHEER IN CHAVAN'S REMARKS OR THE GENERAL ANTI-US TENOR OF THE CONFERENCE. HE READ THEM WITH CARE IN A SEEMINGLY PRO-FORMA DELIVERY WHICH CONTRASTED WITH THE WARMER STYLE HE USED IN - THE MENON EULOGY LAST MONTH. IN SUBSTANCE THERE WAS NO NOTABLE DEPARTURE FROM ESTABLISHED GOI POLICY. CHAVAN NAMED DIEGO GARCIA, BUT DID NOT MENTION THE PRESENCE OF US FLEET UNITS NOW IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. (OTHER SPEAKERS SUBSEQUENTLY

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DID.) THE DIG ON VIETNAM WAS SHARP, BUT THERE WAS SOME EFFORT TO PRESERVE A BALANCE IN HIS ADDRESS. NEITHER THE US NOR THE USSR WAS MENTIONED BY NAME, ALTHOUGH CHAVAN REPEATEDLY REFERRED TO THE GREAT POWERS. THE MINISTER DEPARTED THE MEETING IMMEDIATELY AFTER BAROOAH AND THE CPI CHAIRMAN S.A. DANGE SPOKE. THE LATTER WAS ALL SCORN AND VITUPERATION FOR THE US.

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